

Mr. Randal Perry  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Seattle District  
Care of GPT/BNSF Custer Spur EIS Co-Lead Agencies  
1100 112<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Northeast, Suite 400  
Bellevue, Washington  
98004

October 31, 2012

Dear Mr. Perry,

Enclosed is a well-researched letter that I previously sent to Governor Christine Gregoire in 2011 concerning my opposition to establishing coal export terminals in Washington State. I moved to the Bellingham, Washington area from New York in 2010, in part, for the beauty of the country, and I was concerned at the possibility of establishing a coal export terminal at Cherry Point. Therefore, I researched the effects of coal export terminals for several months and documented these negative effects (54 references) in my letter to Governor Gregoire (with copies sent to relevant parties). My opposition to coal export terminals is based on this research.

Although I have temporarily relocated to California, as a concerned citizen, I was told to resubmit this letter during the Scoping Period for it to "count" and be sent to all relevant parties. Thus, I have included my original letter sent to Governor Gregoire citing my opposition to coal export terminals.

If you need to contact me further, my address is : Lynn Levitt, 14691 Gold Creek Court, Apt. B, Grass Valley, Ca, 95949 and my E-mail is: [katmai43@hotmail.com](mailto:katmai43@hotmail.com). My old home address was: 474 West Pole Rd., Lynden, Wa and old mailing address was P.O. Box 857, Lynden, Wa 98264.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lynn Levitt".

Lynn Levitt, Ph.D.

July 29, 2011

The Honorable Christine Gregoire  
Governor of Washington  
Office of the Governor  
P.O. Box 40002  
Olympia, Washington 98504-0002

Dear Governor Gregoire,

Recently I moved from Patchogue, New York to the Bellingham area as Bellingham was cited in several surveys as one of the best places to live in the United States because of its quality of life. I understand now that there is a proposal to build the largest coal export terminal in the United States at Cherry Point in Whatcom County. Since I am considering buying a house here, I decided to research the impact of established coal export terminals as well as how to provide jobs through industries other than coal. I would like to share my findings and concerns with you. A reference page is attached at the end of the letter.

#### **A. DEALING WITH THE COAL INDUSTRY**

1. ***Fact-checking the Coal Industry*** - Recently in attempts to establish a coal export terminal at Longview, Washington, the Cowlitz County commissioners were informed by the project's backers that they would ship only 5.7 million tons of coal when in reality they planned to ship from 20-60 million tons of coal.[1] in a facility 14 times bigger than publicly admitted. [2]

2. ***Lawsuits and Other Actions Brought Against Coal Export Terminals*** –

Citizens have brought lawsuits and other actions against the coal companies and the railroads because of air pollution and water pollution.

In Seward, Alaska there is an ongoing lawsuit against the Alaska Railroad and the Aurora Coal Company for violation of the federal Clean Water Act.[3] In this case, coal dust from the coal export terminal plus pieces of coal falling directly into the waters of the bay from the conveyor belts loading the ships have severely polluted the waters of Resurrection Bay, a major tourist attraction. Last year the state of Alaska fined the railroad that delivers the coal to the terminal \$220,000 for not adequately controlling dust that dirtied Seward's scenic harbor. [4]

In Long Beach, California, coal dust blown from the coal export terminal exceeded federal guidelines leading to years of citizen fights with the coal company. [5] The coal company spent over 15 years getting exemptions from the Air Quality Management District rules. Two local companies, concerned about their employees' health, relocated away from the terminal.

Of particular concern for the future of Whatcom County's environment is that SSA Marine has already entered into an agreement with the Peabody Energy

Company to ship an initial 24 million tons of coal (to be increased later) from the proposed coal export terminal at Cherry Point. [6] In a recent survey, 500 of the largest, publically-traded U. S. companies were ranked based on their environmental record.[7] **The company with the worst environmental record out of the 500 companies ranked was Peabody Energy Company---in 500<sup>th</sup> place with a “green” score and an environmental impact score of “1” out of a possible 100 points (the higher the score, the better the environmental record).** What does Whatcom County expect to happen to its pristine environment when it willingly brings in and conducts business with a coal company that was ranked as having the worst environmental record of those companies surveyed? Moreover, “increasing coal exports will require coal companies to mine coal that is increasingly dirty, dangerous, and expensive to mine and reclaim” [8]. If citizens have to resort to lawsuits against the Peabody Energy Company for any destruction or pollution of the environment or health issues, does Whatcom County, the local towns, or individuals have enough money and resources to fight a powerful coal industry with its high-paid lawyers; millions of dollars; and political, lobbying, and Wall Street connections? Worse still, if citizens fail to win their lawsuits, then what recourse do they have? Whatcom County’s pristine environment will be placed in the hands of a known environmentally-destructive coal company.

3. *Who Pays to Clean Up the Coal Dust Buildup on the Tracks?* Because of several prior train derailments, the BNSF Railway Company initiated an extensive study of coal dust buildup on the railroad tracks and found that coal dust buildup “prevents water from draining from the tracks which can push the steel rails out of gauge and cause derailments”. [9] However, the BNSF Railway Company, the coal company, and the utility company involved all claimed that it was not their responsibility to pay for the cost of the clean up. “The BNSF Railway Company has also stressed that it has no provisions to enforce compliance or include penalties for failure to meet dust limits” [10] To help resolve this issue, the federal Surface Transportation Board was brought in.

This case is particularly troublesome since Whatcom County will be dealing with **both** the BNSF Railroad and the environmentally-destructive Peabody Energy Company. If either the railroad or the coal company refuses to pay the cost of cleaning up the coal dust buildup on or adjacent to the tracks, who will pay the costs? And exactly who has the power and resources to enforce compliance with coal dust limits or mete out fines for failure to do so?

## **B. HEALTH OF THE CITIZENS**

1. *Air pollution* – The air we breathe can become polluted from blowing coal dust, diesel engines, and the burning of coal. Coal dust from the operations at the export terminal and from the open railway cars becomes airborne and travels considerable distances. Strong winds have blown coal dust from the Robert Banks terminal near Vancouver, Canada to Port Roberts, about three miles away, coating

the water, boats, cars, houses, vegetable gardens, etc. [11]. The coal dust in the vicinity of this terminal doubled from 1977-1999. [12] In British Columbia, Canada, the coal dust from a coal mine was blown at least 17 miles away. [13]

Exposure to coal dust occurs through inhalation, ingestion, and eye contact. Coal dust contains several toxic heavy metals (e.g., lead, mercury) which can result in serious health consequences. It has been reported that “people who live in counties where lots of coal is mined are much more likely to suffer from a chronic array of life-threatening health problems. Residents reported higher rates of cardiopulmonary disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, hypertension, diabetes, and lung and kidney disease in each of the counties”. [14] Coal dust exposure is also associated with wheezing, and cough in children. [15]

It is therefore imperative to scientifically determine (1) the distances coal dust can travel under varying wind conditions, (2) the cumulative effect of coal dust buildup in people’s lungs, especially children, the elderly, and the sick---three populations usually hard hit by air pollution, and (3) coal dust damage to livestock, wildlife, and crops.

The transporting of coal also impacts human health through diesel engine exhaust. “Railroad engines and trucks together release over 600,000 tons of nitrogen oxide and 50,000 tons of particulate matter into the air every year in the process of hauling coal”. [16] [17] Nitrogen oxides and particulate matter are associated with asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, infant mortality, and ischemic stroke. [18][19] Particulate matter is also associated with lung cancer. [20] Diesel exhausts also adversely affects lung development in children from the 10 to 18 years of age and lung functioning as the children reach adulthood. [21]

The third source of air pollution is through coal combustion. Numerous scientific studies have indicated that the burning of coal releases toxic chemicals (e.g., particulate matter, mercury, sulfur dioxide, carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxide) which lead to serious respiratory, cardiovascular, and neurological effects such as asthma, lung cancer, heart disease, and stroke.[22] Shipping coal to be burned in China, known for its lack of pollution controls, will release even greater amounts of these toxic chemicals into the atmosphere. Mercury and other pollutants from China’s coal-fired power plants travel around the world and have already reached the California-Oregon border [23] and Washington State. According to a University of Washington study, coal combustion in Asia is the number one source of mercury contamination in Lake Whatcom. [24] Mercury is a particularly dangerous chemical since it does not decompose in the environment and can therefore work its way through the food chain. [25] Most people become exposed to mercury through eating contaminated fish. Mercury exposure is especially dangerous for pregnant women since it can affect the nervous system and brain of the fetus which can lead to deficits in memory and attention span, developmental delays, mental retardation and other health problems in children. [26][27] Mercury exposure is also associated with cardiovascular effects in adults. [28]. Since no technology exists today to remove mercury from coal-fired plants, [29] and it does not decompose in the environment, protecting the public’s health from this toxic chemical becomes even more challenging.

Coal combustion is also responsible for releasing large amounts of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere that contributes to global warming and its associated health impacts. [30] “The World Health Organization estimated global warming to be responsible for 166,000 deaths in 2000, due to additional mortality from malaria, malnutrition, diarrhea and drowning.” [31]

2. **Noise Pollution** – The operations at the coal export terminal and the numerous coal trains traversing Washington State will increase the levels of noise in the environment over which individuals have no control. The heavy coal cars flatten the railroad tracks which in turn leads to increased squeaking as the coal trains pass by. [32]

Results of scientific research have indicated that noise is a stressor and has negative effects on the physical and mental health of humans, social behaviors such as aggression and altruism, the reading ability of children, and neighborhood satisfaction. [33][34] Moreover, these negative effects are exacerbated when people perceive that they have no control over the sources of the noise.

### C. ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION/POLLUTION

1. **Water Pollution/Destruction of Wetlands** – Blowing coal dust from the proposed coal export terminal at Cherry Point can pollute the bay waters, nearby streams, and lakes (e.g., Lake Terrell). Coal dust and coal falling into the waters of the bay may damage the sensitive herring populations upon which the salmon feed. [35] In addition, the tourism and recreation industries would become adversely affected if the waterways become covered with coal dust.

A coal export terminal at Cherry Point will also destroy approximately 141 acres of sensitive wetlands. [36] Even if a comparable amount of acres of wetlands are established elsewhere, just where are these wetlands going to be located? If they are too close to the coal export terminal, they will become polluted by coal dust. If these wetlands are placed too far away, the vegetation for feeding may differ, or these may be off the migratory route of certain waterfowl and bird species, or these may be beyond the territory used by the smaller species resulting in their deaths. Therefore, the impact of wetland destruction on the feeding, nesting, and breeding of fish, waterfowl, and any other species using the present wetlands (or lands nearby) needs to be investigated. Particular attention needs to be paid to the impact of wetland destruction on the survival of any endangered or threatened species protected by the Endangered Species Act, since fragmentation of habitat is one of the largest contributors to their decline. [37]

2. **Pollution of the Soil** – The BNSF Railway itself estimates that a single, heavily loaded railcar can lose 500 lbs of coal and coal dust in transit which is over 30 tons per unit train during each trip. [38] The accumulation over time can be considerable. In Norfolk, Virginia, soil contamination from high

coal levels was found near the coal export terminal and along the railroad tracks used by the coal trains. [39] Results of several other studies have also linked coal dust to soil contamination. [40] Therefore, the effects of contaminated soil on crops and pastures upon which livestock graze need to be continuously monitored. But by whom? And at what costs to the state budget and our taxes?

#### **D. OTHER EFFECTS OF COAL EXPORT TERMINALS**

- 1. *Traffic Congestion and Accidents*** – Numerous one-to-two mile long, heavily loaded coal trains and the returning unloaded coal trains traversing Washington State will create traffic congestion with long waits at each railroad crossing. This will also increase the number of potential train accidents involving people and/or increase train derailments and needed repair [41] and delay emergency responders such as ambulances and police. [42]
- 2. *Property Values*** - The value of people's homes will depreciate due to blowing coal dust and increased noise levels from the terminal and the coal trains. Homeowners, businesses, and local governments will be burdened with increased costs to clean up the coal dust on their homes, businesses, and public buildings, roads, and spaces, respectively.
- 3. *Aesthetics*** - People move to and visit Washington State partly because of its aesthetically beautiful environment and the recreation opportunities that this affords. Consider what the impact of ugly, unsightly, coal export terminals and long coal trains with open rail cars crossing Washington State will do to its image and the tourism and recreation industries. Will Washington State, now known as the "Evergreen State" become known as the "Coal Dust State" and become associated with the other coal states Montana, Wyoming, Kentucky, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania?

If a cost/benefit analysis of building a coal export terminal at Cherry Point were conducted, would all the costs cited in this letter be worth the benefits of only about 250 permanent jobs? And if the largest coal export terminal in the United States is built at Cherry Point, make no mistake. This approval will encourage the powerful, politically-connected coal industry to seek more permits to build even more terminals along Washington's coast and the Columbia River, using the large terminal at Cherry Point as a precedent to squelch any community opposition. Already the Millenium coal company is planning to resubmit its application to build a coal export terminal on the Columbia River at Longview, Washington. On the Oregon side of the Columbia River, the Port of St. Helens at Columbia City, Oregon, and the Port of Morrow near Boadman, Oregon are now being looked at as potential ports for coal export terminals [43] It appears from this that the coal companies are in the process of an all-out assault on the Northwest states of Washington and Oregon to build as many coal export terminals as they can along both their coastlines and the Columbia River that separates the two states. If this happens, hundreds more miles of rail lines will have to be laid across Washington and Oregon to

carry millions more tons of coal, exposing even more citizens in communities along the train routes to the damaging effects of coal. [44] “These lines would cut through pristine areas, sever farms and ranches, reducing productivity and property values.” [45] These lines would also split wildlife habitats and interrupt migratory patterns [46] This will prove an environmental disaster for both Washington and Oregon with immediate and long-term consequences for the quality of life for their residents. Since the entire state of Washington will be affected, **this necessitates a thorough environmental review at the state level.**

## **E. PROVIDING MORE JOBS IN CLEAN, RENEWABLE ENERGY**

Today there are literally thousands of jobs that have been created in the clean, renewable energy sector. For example, the U.S. Department of Energy Loan Program has committed \$30 billion to support 42 clean energy projects that should create or save 66,000 jobs [47] For example, solar manufacturing in Longmont, Colorado provided 2000 construction jobs and 1500 permanent jobs [48]

Jobs in the clean, renewable energy sector will increase even more in the future. At the college level, more courses are being offered each year in clean energy in such departments as engineering and architecture. In May, 2011 the German government announced that it is closing all of its nuclear power plants by 2022 and move full speed ahead on the development of clean energy.[49] Big companies like Ikea, Google, and PepsiCo are increasingly turning to wind power. Electricity generation by renewable resources is expanding rapidly with China’s renewable sector being the world’s fastest growing at more than 25% annually. [50] According to the European Wind Energy Association, China is now the largest driver for global wind power development. [51] Between 2005 and 2009 China’s installed wind power capacity doubled every year, surpassing the United States in 2010. [52] **“China’s wind power can reach 230GW of installed capacity by 2020, which is equal to 13 times the current capacity of the Three Gorges Dam: its annual electricity output of 464.9 TWh could replace 200 coal fire power plants according to the China Wind Power Outlook 2010, a new report jointly released by Greenpeace, the Chinese Renewable Energy Industries Association (CREIA), and the Global Wind Energy Council (GWEC).”[53]** **And of what use will coal export terminals be then?**

In a recent article citing fourteen ways to create jobs in the United States, former President Bill Clinton said that we could put a million people to work retrofitting existing buildings throughout our country with clean energy. [54] These buildings in turn would recover these costs through energy savings within a few years. President Clinton stated that the Empire State Building in New York City was retrofitted for a cost of \$4.4 million dollars, and these costs would be recouped in five years through energy savings. He also related how the states of Nevada and Minnesota created thousands of jobs in clean, renewable energy that benefitted the economy without harming the environment.

Where then will the jobs in the energy sector be in the year 2020 or 2050 or beyond? In 20<sup>th</sup> century dirty coal or in 21<sup>st</sup> century clean, renewable energy? The decision that you make today has tremendous implications for the future of Washington State and the quality of life for its citizens. What will your legacy be, Governor Gregoire? Will you become known as the governor of the once beautiful state of Washington who welcomed

in the dirty coal industry to pollute our air, water, and soil and put the public's health at risk or will you become known as a leader with the foresight to promote jobs in clean energy that benefited both our economy and the environment? What will your decision be, Governor Gregoire? The decision is in your hands to make sure Washington State leads the way.

Sincerely,

Lynn Levitt, Ph.D.

cc:

Governor John Kitzhaber, Oregon  
Governor Jerry Brown, California  
United States Senator Patty Murray  
United States Senator Maria Cantrell  
United States Representative Rick Larsen  
Washington State Senator Kevin Ranker  
Washington State House of Representatives Jeff Morris  
Washington State House of Representatives Kristine Lytton  
Peter Goldmark Commissioner of Public Lands  
Ted Sturdevant, Wa. State Dept. of Ecology  
Tyler Schroeder, Whatcom Co. Planning Supervisor  
Peter Kremen, Whatcom County Executive  
Barbara Brenner, Whatcom County Council  
Sam Crawford, Whatcom County Council  
Bill Knutzen, Whatcom County Council  
Kathy Kershner, Whatcom County Council  
Tony Larson, Whatcom County Council  
Ken Mann, Whatcom County Council  
Carl Weimer, Whatcom County Council  
Bellingham Mayor Dan Pike  
Everett Mayor Ray Stevanson  
Edmonds Mayor Mike Cooper  
Seattle Mayor Mike McGinn  
Mt. Vernon Mayor Bud Norris  
Tacoma Mayor Marilyn Strickland  
Vancouver, WA Mayor Timothy Leavitt  
Ferndale Mayor Gary Jensen  
Lynden Mayor Scott Korthuis  
Centralia Mayor Harlan Thompson  
Kent Mayor Suzette Cooke



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